

CHESS HORIZONS

Best State Magazine 2006 CJA / Fred Cramer Awards

Gus Gosselin
1926-2007



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About MACA

The Massachusetts Chess Association is an educational non-profit organization whose purpose is to promote chess in Massachusetts and represent the interest of chess players within the state to the governing body of chess in the United States, **The United States Chess Federation (USCF)**.

As part of its role as a state organization, MACA has programs in place to support the existing chess community as well as promote chess among schools and the general public. Highlights of these programs are:



Providing at least four major tournaments each year:

Massachusetts Open (State Championship)
Massachusetts Game/60 Championship
Greater Boston Open
Harry Nelson Pillsbury Memorial



Running a scholastic program, which consists of a series of tournaments to determine the state's scholastic champions as well as "warm up" tournaments throughout the year. Free boards and sets are provided to schools and clubs through MACA's **Living Memorial Chess Fund (LMCF)**.

Quarterly publication of the award winning *Chess Horizons*, a journal of regional, national and international chess news and features.

Promotion and development of chess in correctional institutions through our Prison Chess program.

We hope you will chose to join MACA and enjoy the benefits of membership while knowing that you are helping to promote chess throughout Massachusetts.

ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP RATES

(Includes Subscription to Chess Horizons unless otherwise noted.)

Adult: \$12.00; Life: \$175.00; Life (age 65 or older): \$100.00; Junior (under age 18): \$6.00.

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In Memoriam: Gilbert F. Gosselin

Pre-eminent organizer-director-promoter

George Mirijanian

On May 21, 2007 the chess community in Massachusetts lost the most innovative, hardest-working organizer-director-promoter of the royal game in the past thirty-five years. Gilbert F. Gosselin, better known as “Gus” to the thousands of players in New England and beyond with whom he came in contact either directly or indirectly, passed away after a long illness – six months before his eighty-first birthday. Gus was one of a kind. As MACA’s most outstanding volunteer, his chess accomplishments outshone all other organizers in New England.

He was born on November 25, 1926 in New Bedford, the son of Joseph and Mildred (Davis) Gosselin, and was of French-Canadian ancestry. His grandparents came from the province of Quebec. He taught himself chess at about the age of ten, when he discovered the world of chess books at the New Bedford Public Library. Gus graduated in 1946 from New Bedford Vocational High School, where he was the class president. As a scholar-athlete, he was recognized as an exceptional student – excelling in the classroom with his great analytical skills and playing football on the school’s varsity team.

His engineering skills earned him a job as a design engineer at Morse Cutting Tools in New Bedford after graduation, but two years later he enlisted in the U.S. Navy and served with distinction until being honorably discharged in 1952 in San Francisco. He trained at the Great Lakes facility in Michigan and was assigned to the USS Hector during the Korean War. Among countries he served in were Japan and South Korea. After returning to his hometown, he resumed work at Morse Cutting Tools and stayed there until his retirement in 1984.

Gus married his wife Ruth on April 5, 1952 in New Bedford. They lived there, most notably on 17 Kenney St., until moving to Malden in 1992 to live with their daughter Marcia and family. While in New Bedford, Gus became a member



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Ruth and Gus Gosselin with Governor Mitt Romney

of the local chess club, which subsequently became the Southeastern Mass. Chess Club. His interest in chess became more intense during Bobby Fischer’s world championship victory in 1972. A year later, he became involved in the Massachusetts Chess Association as one of twenty-five local chairmen of the 1973-1974 MACA membership drive. He proved himself the most successful among membership drive chairmen by enrolling nineteen new members for the state association. For his efforts, he received a plaque and a two-year MACA membership – amounting to \$5 in those days!

Gus became a member of the MACA board directors in 1975. He served as a regional scholastic coordinator for Southeastern Mass. in 1976 and then became the state association’s treasurer in 1977. In the past thirty years, he had served in every key position in the organization, including that of president, vice president, elections commissioner and, for many years, its scholastic coordinator. In the course of those years, Gus served as USCF Regional Vice President as well as president of the New England Chess

Association for several years. Also in the past thirty years, Gus organized, directed, promoted and sponsored more chess events than any other individual in New England. He took a budding William J. Comeau Memorial Fund, which was established to help schools acquire chess equipment, and turned it into the highly successful Living Memorial Chess Fund, which he established to honor deceased as well as living players and benefactors. Because of Gus’ acumen in investments and his knack for receiving donations, MACA now has one of the largest endowments of any state chess association in the country. In the past several decades, the fund has issued grants in the amount of tens of thousands of dollars for chess sets and boards to schools in the state. It is part of Gus’ outstanding legacy.

In November 2004, Gus was bestowed with the Governor’s Points of Light Award, which is the highest honor given to a volunteer in Massachusetts and recognizes youth, adults, nonprofit organizations and businesses that have made an exemplary contribution to their communities through volunteer service. The presentation was made at the State House



on February 14, 2005 by Governor Mitt Romney, who recognized Gus as an individual who had worked hard to promote chess as a way to reach troubled youth by organizing local and state tournaments. Gus' work in chess with inner-city youngsters in eastern Massachusetts has no equal.

In June 2006, Gus was informed by the U.S. Chess Federation that he had been chosen to receive an Outstanding Career Achievement Award for 2006. Because of his illness, he was unable to attend the 2006 Awards Luncheon on August 12 of that year in Oak Brook, IL. But the recognition by the USCF of Gus' outstanding career was long overdue.

Gus was innovative in many ways. As the "Johnny Appleseed of Chess," he planted the seeds of chess for youngsters and adults over a wide area in eastern Massachusetts and Rhode Island. He organized and directed innumerable adult tournaments, including New England Opens, at a time when organizers were not to be found who were willing to incur the financial risk of holding such an event. He kept chess alive in Rhode Island for several decades, organizing events at Rhode Island College in Providence and setting up a series of

"Pawneaters" throughout the state. He initiated the series of Burger King tournaments in Waltham, Framingham and Chelmsford, as well as in Providence. The tournaments brought more youngsters into chess than any other scholastic tournaments in New England. He also initiated Burger King chess camps, which were held during school vacation weeks and during summer months. Gus enrolled more USCF and MACA members than any of his contemporaries. It is a legacy that future generations of players should never forget. Gus' son Matthew has pledged to continue the Burger King tournaments in memory of his father.

Gus will never be forgotten. His achievements in chess will be indelibly etched in the annals of U.S. chess history. May he rest in peace.

Here are some of the memorial tributes as posted on the MACA Discussion Forum online:

When I first moved to MA, I asked everyone I met about scholastic chess, and of course all roads led to Gus – at the Y, at the BCC, at the chessfest and the Burger Kings. Who remembers the photo of Gus wearing the Burger King

crown? He taught the kids to play for the love of the game, not just to win, not just to rack up rating points. When a chess parent nominated him for a Governor's Point of Light award a few years ago, the liaison at the Governor's office told me that though they receive thousands of applications for this honor, she knew upon reading Gus' history that he was the perfect recipient for the award. The photo of Gus standing with Mitt Romney in the Governor's office is slightly different from the one of Gus wearing the Burger King crown, but just as memorable.

– Maryanne Reilly

Gus was like part of our family. Both our kids knew and adored him. My wife thought he was one of the kindest, gentlest men around. I think of him as a local folk hero. He inspired more than a generation of kids and dads to play chess. He taught them more than just chess lessons, but lessons about life.

– Matt, Jacob, Phoebe & Emi Fong

Gus always displayed a sense for hard work, responsibility and productivity for chess in scholastic events. He was many times Scholastic Coordinator for MACA, showing a high degree of leadership in this field, and a faithful volunteer for whatever his heart desired to do. He was a chess teacher in all that the word represents, but above all as simple and common man as he used to be: a great man.

– Bernardo Iglesias

I was always amazed by Gus's devotion to chess as an organizer year after year, without fail.

– Allan Savage

In the New England chess world, if you mentioned "Gus," everyone knew who you meant. When I first started playing chess in tournaments, many of my first tournaments were at Gus' Pawneaters. He was so gentle and unassuming that I was made to feel comfortable and could enjoy playing chess. I think that was a common experience for many children, too. He never complained about his illness, never seemed to make much of a hospitalization. He was always so active. I remember Gus mentioned that he had been a running-back for a local



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He inspired more than a generation of kids and dads to play chess. He taught them more than just chess lessons, but lessons about life.

Chess Horizons

semi-pro football team. I must say, I couldn't imagine that, but it just shows my poverty of imagination, and the complexity of a very modest, complex man who helped form the face of Massachusetts chess for our era.

– Robert Oresick

I was once told that the passing of a man (or woman) can best be measured by the memories people have of him, and the lives he has changed for the better – not how many boats and homes the person had. Gus passed away a wealthy man indeed. He has changed more lives than I can ever know, for the good, from young to old, novice chess player, to experienced tournament directors, all were better for Gus. All will miss him dearly.

– Harvey Reed

Gus was (among other things) superhero of the low budget tournament. It seems he encountered more than his share of obstacles getting a decent space. At a Malden Pawn Eater about ten years ago, we had to play next to the bar at an Asian restaurant. Patrons came stumbling over and asked how the horse moved, etc. during our rated games. The interaction made for a fun time. I remember that tourney fondly!

– Larry Williams

His enthusiasm and passion for the game will be missed.

– Dan Korsunsky

Gus was one of the nicest guys in chess – a real gentleman and a class act. He directed many tournaments throughout the New England region and for many years he was instrumental in promoting chess in the Rhode Island area. Gus enjoyed teaching chess to children and he was very active in scholastic chess. Gus was the consummate professional as a tournament director and he will be greatly missed.

– Jim Rizzitano

Gus was my son's, Chris Williams, first chess teacher at the Newton Y. He had twenty boys and I always marveled at how he was able to control and interest them. He was a wonderful teacher and a wonderful role model. He will be sorely



Photo: Robert Oresick

missed, but his legacy lives on the lives of so many people who through him found something rewarding and character-building in chess.

– Shirley Milgrom

Gus accomplished more to promote chess away from the board than anyone has done at the board in the forty years that I have been involved in chess. In my opinion, he was a GM in the game of life and that is his legacy.

– George Winsor

For about two decades in Rhode Island, there was always – always – Gus. If not for the tournaments he ran, I don't know where or when I would've played.

– Rick Massimo

My best memory of Gus was running one of the South Station Opens with his laptop. It was the one featured in an issue of *Chess Horizons* where Frank Vogel accidentally knocked my coffee into the keyboard, forcing manual pairings in the last round. It may have been utter chaos at that time, but it's one of the few tournament "war stories" I don't mind telling over again.

– Allan Ong

Gus was truly one of a kind: a tireless, selfless advocate for the joy of the game, and so energetic in sharing that gift.

– Mike Henroid

Gus was "the Leader" of chess in Rhode Island and Massachusetts. He was ambitious and dedicated to promoting chess for children. He ran chess tournaments, chess camps, sold equipment with his wife Ruth, and mailed out countless

flyers. He never stopped working ... until he just couldn't anymore. We remember him sitting at the table during the Burger King tournaments in Providence folding up flyers and labeling envelopes for the upcoming events, while his son Matthew did pairings for the rounds. Gus worked hard – and Matt liked to help. He also took time to sit, smile and share stories about his family – his blue eyes would light up ... he loved them all. Gus was special – we thank him for everything – especially for providing so much equipment to schools through the Living Memorial Chess Fund.

– David, Marie, Kathleen & Kelly Coccio

Gus was one of the first chess organizers that I met. He provided me with twenty chess sets so that I could start teaching. Hundreds of my students participated in a number of his tournaments. It's hard to imagine myself coming to a chess tournament and not seeing him there. Thank you Gus, for all you've done for chess in Massachusetts.

– Valery Frenklakh

From the years that I have worked with Gus, I can say that, in his age, he had more energy than many people have in their twenties. Everyday Gus was off to either teach in schools, hold chess camps, and run tournaments – all this in his seventies! His work had a positive impact on so many scholastic players, and his lifelong dedication to chess is an inspiration.

– Joe Perl

Your legacy does you more honor than any words we can write.

– Ken Ballou